

## Geographies of brands and branding

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### Abstract

This paper seeks to elucidate the geographies of brands and branding through interpreting their geographical entanglements. Focusing upon goods and services, it argues, first, that the object of the brand and the process of branding are geographical because they are entangled in inescapable spatial associations. Second, these spatial associations matter because they are geographically differentiated and uneven. Third, geographically entangled brands and branding are closely related to spatially uneven development through the articulation and reinforcement of economic and social inequalities and unequal and competitive socio-spatial relations and divisions of labour. Despite their apparent pervasiveness and significance for geographical enquiry, the geographical entanglements of brands and branding have been under-investigated in Geography and hardly recognised and poorly specified in other social science research. A critical account is provided that demonstrates the entangled geographies of brands and branding in their: i) geographical origins, provenance and socio-spatial histories; ii) spatial circuits of value and meaning and uneven development; and, iii) territorial and relational spaces and places. Reading the changing forms, extent and nature of the geographical entanglements of brands and branding provides a novel but relatively overlooked window to consider and illustrate the vital spaces at the intersections of economic, social, cultural and political geographies, the tensions between relational and territorial notions of space and place and the politics and limits of brands and branding. Learning from wider social science, the paper demonstrates the importance of geography by projecting more clearly specified and sophisticated treatments of space and place into accounts of brands and branding.

### Keywords

Brands      Branding      Geographical entanglement      Uneven development

## I Introduction

This paper seeks to elucidate the geographies of brands and branding through interpreting their geographical entanglements. Focusing upon goods and services, it argues that the object of the brand and the process of branding are geographical in at least three related ways. First, brands are entangled in inescapable spatial associations. As an identifiable kind or variety of good or service, a brand is constituted of values or ‘equity’ (Aaker 1996) – such as associations, awareness, loyalty, origin and perceived quality – that are imbued to varying degrees and in differing ways by spatial connections and connotations. As a process that works to articulate, connect, enhance and represent the facets and cues embodied in brands in meaningful ways, branding too is enmeshed in and cannot rid itself of geographical associations and contexts. What values and meanings people ascribe to specific brands and how they respond to branding, for example, are entangled in their own socio-spatial relations and identities and their perceptions of the brand and branding’s spatial associations and connotations. Over time, branded objects and branding processes accumulate histories that are social *and* spatial and matter to their evolution. In diverse ways and to variable extents, then, space and place are written through branded objects and the social practices of branding. It might even be said that brands and branding embody an “inherent spatiality” (Power and Hauge 2008: 21).

Secondly, branded objects and branding processes are themselves geographically differentiated and uneven in, for example, their manifestation, representation, visibility, fixity and mobility throughout the spaces, places and temporalities of economy, society, culture and polity. Contrary to some overstated claims of ‘global’ homogeneity and ubiquity (e.g. Friedman 2005), branded objects find changing kinds and degrees of commercial, social, cultural and political resonance and become sticky in specific spaces and particular places over time. The spatial circuits of the production, circulation,

consumption and regulation of specific brands may be highly geographically uneven. In seeking to shape and respond to the particularities of different geographical market contexts, branding practices may similarly be spatially attenuated and heterogeneous – even for the same brand in different places. Geographical differentiation, then, is integral to the different ways in which different people in different places see, interpret and act in response to branded objects and branding processes.

These spatial associations of brands and branding matter because of their uneven geographies and their relationship with spatially uneven development through the orchestration and reinforcement of economic and social inequalities and the articulation of unequal and competitive socio-spatial relations and divisions of labour. Thus, and thirdly, the entanglements of brands and branding are not only geographically differentiated in their own right but they intertwine with spatially uneven development because their underlying dynamic of differentiation is predicated on the search for, exploitation and (re)production of economic and social inequalities over space and through time. Identifying, creating, encouraging and reinforcing geographical market segmentation along economic and social lines fuels the branding priorities of brand owners, for example in identifying the spaces of lucrative premium niches or rapidly expanding volume markets, and shapes the economic and social market contexts facing people and places. Geographically entangled brands and branding may contribute further to uneven development by forging and even amplifying unequal socio-spatial divisions of labour and competitive socio-spatial relations between spaces and places involved in their spatial circuits of production, circulation, consumption and regulation. This might occur, for example, through brand owners' outsourcing and exploitation of marginal labour pools internationally, competition between rival producers and circulators of competing brands from particular places and regulatory agencies in specific jurisdictional territories seeking to define market standards capable of excluding specific goods or services brands.

Despite their apparent pervasiveness and significance for geographical enquiry, the geographies of brands and branding have been under-investigated and relatively neglected. The spatial entanglements

of brands and branding have received relatively little attention and limited empirical coverage in Geography. Other strands of social science research too have hardly recognised the spatial dimensions of brands and branding and have tended to adopt somewhat impoverished and poorly specified notions of geography. Drawing from literatures across the social sciences and recent debates about entanglement, this paper provides a critical account that demonstrates the entangled geographies of brands and branding in their: i) geographical origins, provenance and socio-spatial histories; ii) spatial circuits of value and meaning and uneven development; and, iii) territorial and relational spaces and places. While brands and branding have extended to encompass people, places, charities, campaigning organisations, universities, political parties and states (see, for example, Arvidsson 2005; Lury 2004; Moor 2007; van Ham 2001), the focus here is on the well established and sophisticated ground of the geographies of brands and branding of goods and services (see Holt 2006a). Drawing upon a critique of existing literatures, the paper explores geographical entanglement as a means of interpreting the geographies of brands and branding. It argues that distinguishing the changing forms, extent and nature of the geographical entanglements that ensnare branded objects and branding processes can help interpret and explain the diversity and variety of the ways in which they are enmeshed in space and place. Analysing their geographical entanglements dispels the possibility that brands and branding could be “spaceless concepts” (Lee 2002: 334) devoid of geographical context. This conceptualisation seeks to contribute to emergent brand and branding geographies (see, for example, Cook and Harrison 2003; Edensor and Kothari 2006; Jackson *et al.* 2006; Lewis 2007; Power and Hauge 2008) by providing a geographically literate way of interpreting the spatial associations and implications of brands and branding and their socio-spatial histories.

The paper concludes by arguing that reading the spaces and places of brands and branding in this way has broader implications for geographical inquiry because the geographical entanglements of branded objects and branding processes touch upon and connect concerns between sub-disciplinary domains in Geography. The spatial and multi-faceted nature of brands, for example, makes them simultaneously ‘economic’ as goods and services in markets, ‘social’ as collectively produced,

circulated and consumed objects, ‘cultural’ as entities providing meanings and identities and ‘political’ as regulated intellectual properties, financial assets and traded commodities. Consideration of the entangled geographies of brands and branding provides a novel but relatively overlooked point of entry better to link the material, discursive and symbolic in order to understand and illuminate important issues at the intersections of geographical sub-disciplines. The paper contributes to current geographical debates about the relationships between competing notions of space and place (see, for example, Allen and Cochrane 2007; Amin 2004; Hudson 2007; MacLeod and Jones 2007) by questioning binary and polarised views and demonstrating how a consideration of entangled geographies of brands and branding illustrates tensions that can be relational *and* territorial, bounded *and* unbounded, fluid *and* fixed, territorialising *and* de-territorialising.

In the light of this analysis, a central task of geographical enquiry might then be to develop more sophisticated ways through which to understand, research, interpret and explain such complex, overlapping and evolving spatialities. Beyond Geography, the argument here represents an early step in engaging with the wider social science literatures to learn from their insights about the spatial dimensions of brands and branding and to demonstrate the importance of geography by projecting more clearly specified and sophisticated treatments of space and place into accounts of brands and branding and by illustrating the importance of the spatial dimensions of entanglement. Illuminating the entangled geographies of brands and branding underpins interpretation of their politics and limits by providing a means to analyse their connections to people and places.

## **II Entangled geographies of brands and branding**

In seeking to interpret and explain the spatialities of brands and branding one reading can usefully draw from the recent debate about entanglement in economic anthropology and economic sociology. The literature is particularly helpful here in its focus upon the ways in which the commercial

imperative is moving toward the ever more inclusive entanglement of the “transactable object” of goods and services in the life of consumers and is made meaningful and resonant across a “diversity of values and value systems” by the agency of sellers across a range of registers - rationally, aesthetically, culturally, morally and so on (Barry and Slater 2002: 183). Competition is seen to imply innovation in the ‘qualification’ and ‘singularization’ of goods and services and their closer attachment to consumers (Callon 2005: 6). Against Callon’s (2002; 2005) claims for a necessary moment of framing and disentanglement through market transactions that free the protagonists in exchange from further ties that would prevent the inalienable transfer of property rights, Miller (2002: 227) argues for an ongoing process of increasing entanglement because “...most industries have to engage in highly qualitative and entangled judgements about looks and style and image and ‘feel’ out of which they may, if they have the right sense of the ‘street’, make a profit. The way to profitability is not through disentanglement, but through further entanglement”.

In a geographical reading of this debate, Lee (2006: 422) too emphasises the inseparability of economy/society because the “Entangled economic geographies...remain unframed – or rather multiply framed – in the senses both that the agents, objects, goods and merchandise involved in them remain more, or less, imperfectly distinguished and associated with one another and that multiple social relations are at play between them”. For Lee, Callon’s economism and desire for a “purification of economic relations” risks missing “...the inherent complexity of ordinary economies and thereby places limits on the economic geographical imagination...” (2006: 414). The conception of always and ongoing geographical entanglement underpins the argument here that the inescapable spatial associations of branded ‘transactable objects’ and meaning-making of branding processes constitute inseparable geographical entanglements. In this view, brands and branding are geographical because they are inescapably intertwined in spatial associations and connotations. Accounts in economic anthropology, marketing and sociology too recognise such geographical entanglement in “spatial identifications” (Miller 1998: 185), “country and cultural signifiers” (Phau and Prendergast 2000: 164) and in how “...place gets into goods by the way its elements manage to combine”

(Molotch 2002: 686). Indeed, sociologist Arvidsson (2005: 239) argues that “Building brand equity is about fostering a number of possible attachments around the brand...experiences, emotions, attitudes, lifestyles or, most importantly perhaps, loyalty”. The conceptual and analytical task, then, is to interpret how and why branded objects and branding processes are inseparably and ever more implicated in processes of being entangled in and through socio-spatial relations and circuits of value and meaning and what this means for geographical differentiation and uneven development.

The inextricably geographical associations and connections of goods and services brands and their branding – what is interpreted here as their entangled geographies – are longstanding and integral categories of brand and branding definition, value and meaning but they have been unevenly recognised as such. Molotch (2002: 665) claims this is because of the “...under-appreciated ways that geographical space figures in making up goods”. And, it should be added, services too. The rapid growth, evolving sophistication and widespread use of ‘brand’ as a “common currency” (Murphy 1998: 1) have multiplied the competing definitions of the brand. This is especially evident amongst the proliferation of largely prescriptive business, consulting and practitioner accounts (see, for example, Hart and Murphy 1998; Upshaw 1995). One influential definition is that a brand refers to characteristics of a kind or variety of a particular good or service (de Chernatony 2001). To brand is literally to label, burn or mark. Even to place indelibly in the memory or stigmatize. Originating in pre-Roman livestock and pottery and Medieval trades, brands marked identifiable distinctions in property as proof of ownership or marks of infamy (Room 1998) and established differentiated and recognisable identities for goods and trades in competition (Tregear 2003). Brand names, signs and logos evolved to identify and articulate the character of goods and services (Riezebos 2003) and reassure consumers of quality and, critical for the argument here, geographical origin. While no single or generally accepted ‘one-size-fits-all’ model of the tangible and, of growing significance, the intangible facets of brands and their relative importance and relationships exists (de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley 1998; Holt 2006a; Thakor and Kohli 1996), a key conceptualization of the brand argues that ‘brand equity’ comprises the “...set of assets (and liabilities) linked to a brand’s name and

symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to a firm's customers" (Aaker 1996: 15). In this view, brand equity is seen as a function of brand loyalty, awareness, perceived quality and associations. Each of which, it is argued here, are inseparably entangled in space and place.

Branding is interpreted as the relatively more recent process of adding value to goods and services by providing meaning (McCracken 1993) and seeking to engender consumer trust and goodwill through positive associations in the brand (de Chernatony 2001). Defining branding suffers from the same outpouring of competing new accounts from practitioners and gurus that complicate the task of defining the brand (Moor 2007). In one sense, branding describes the "...the non-material, creative side to production [that] relies heavily upon the input of signs and symbols to differentiate products and make them meaningful" (Allen 2002: 48). This process is what Jackson *et al.*'s (2006) cultural economy of branding calls the 'manufacture of meaning', especially for new 'brands-in-the-making'. The understanding of branding as a process of meaning making encompasses notions of 're-branding' for altering or changing the associations of brands, for example as part of efforts to reposition goods in more appropriate market contexts (Dwyer and Jackson 2003). While it is analytically helpful to distinguish between the brand as an object and branding as a process, their relationship is intimate and important. For Arvidsson (2006) this significant inter-dependency works through the practices of brand management which seek to align and co-ordinate the attributes, characteristics and values of brands through their broader circulation and promotion via various communication media through branding. Brands here perform the role of what Lury (2004) calls 'new media objects' and branding is seen as a means of shaping and valorising the commitment and investments of consumers in brands in order to "reproduce a distinctive brand image and strengthen brand equity" (Arvidsson 2005: 74).

The argument here is that the attributes and characteristics that constitute brands of goods and services and their differentiating marks are inescapably situated in spatial context and entangled in geographical connections. Facets of brand equity are inseparable from geographical associations and



meanings. Loyalty, awareness, perceived quality, attributes and associations of a specific brand, for example, inescapably overlap with spatially inflected considerations of who makes the good or delivers the service and from where as well as their identities, histories and socio-spatial connotations. Deliberately manufactured spatialities can be invoked, for example as "...the constructed imaginative geographies that are used to sell commodities via adverts, labels, trademarks, copyright or billboards...[that]...fill the vacuum of geographical ignorance with questionable, but commercially effective images of other places and cultures: think of Del Monte man, Uncle Ben's rice, or Jeep Cherokee" (Castree 2001: 1520-21). Unintended and/or undesirable spatial ties and geographical meanings too can entangle brands in ways that make extrication difficult, for example through consumer agency propelling the growth of fakes and fashionable taste for the luxury British Burberry brand's signature design amongst American rap stars, 'chavs' and 'downmarket' celebrities (Power and Hauge 2008; Moor 2007). In a similar and intimate relation with brands, the meaning making of branding relies upon the identification, articulation and representation of signs and symbols inescapably entangled with their spatial context and connotations. Branding practices rely upon designs, logos and other symbolic tools variously to invoke and characterise often aspirant geographically located lifestyles. Molotch (2002: 680), for example, argues that the "...branding dynamic uses place image to unite products and consumers who identify with a favored way of life and then sells them all elements of what it takes to live that imagined geographic life style". Indeed, the emergence and rise of more pervasive branding has further deepened its interdependent spatial relationships with brands. As Moor (2007: 48) argues "Branding...is a kind of spatial extension and combination, in which previously discrete spaces of the brand – the advert, the point of purchase, the product in the home – are both multiplied, so that there are simply more 'brand spaces', and made to refer back and forth to one another so that they begin to connect up or overlap". In this way, branding can be thought of as what Thrift (1985) called a spatially situated social practice intimately connected with brands.

Further deepening the argument here, the brand and branding literatures across the social sciences argue that the spatial associations of geographical entanglement have grown in importance as part of shifts in brand and branding practices. Following the fragmentation of marketing's traditional 'social engineering' paradigm from the 1950s and the growing sophistication of owners and specialised consultants' branding strategies (Holt 2006a), 'product-plus-brand' has evolved into 'brand-as-concept' (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). Branding practices have extended and deepened in seeking to construct meanings and forge longer lasting entanglements through wider ranges of goods and services brands to lifestyles and social identities appealing to sophisticated, aesthetically aware and reflexive consumers, especially from affluent and elite social groups (Urry 1995). This intensified rise of branding during the 1990s heralded a closer inter-relationship with brands because "...almost all accounts produced at this time saw brands as incorporating far more than simply a name, trademark and associated badge or logo, and assumed instead that brands should embody 'relationships', 'values' and 'feelings', to be expressed through an expanded range of 'executional elements' and 'visual indicators'" (Moor 2007: 6). Saturation and sophistication in western consumer markets as well as new forms of market research, consumer behaviour and media prompted the search for brand attributes, especially "intangible ideals" (Holt 2006a: 299), not easily replicable or substitutable because "...differentiation in terms of function is less and less often able to sustain competitive advantage (because it can be imitated so quickly)" (Lury 2004: 28). The argument here is that geographical entanglements, amongst other dimensions of brand equity, have been used to provide a multi-faceted, rich and pliable source of attributes and associations capable of creating and resonating with such distinctive, even authentic, values and meanings. As a concept with multiple layers of meaning (Harvey 1996), place is especially amenable to forms of social construction whereby "geographical imaginaries" (Jackson 2002: 3) can be appropriated, associated and/or projected *in* and *through* brands and branding processes (see also Thakor and Kohli 1996: 35). Drawing upon this notion of geographical entanglement, the following sections develop a critical account of the geographies of brands and branding from across the disciplines organised around analytical themes

that seek to demonstrate the entangled spatial associations of branded objects and branding processes.

### 1 *Geographical origins, provenance and socio-spatial histories*

The geographical origins and provenance of goods and services are historically longstanding and enduring entanglements of branded objects and branding processes that establish and further cement their geographies. Where goods and services are perceived to come or be delivered from is integral to their brand identities and the facets with which branding processes might work. Goods and services are inescapably imbued with spatial associations because they “...contain – in the details of their fabrication and outcome – the places of their origin...Place gets into goods by the way its elements managed to combine and the stuff shows it” (Molotch 2002: 665, 686). Historically, marks identifying brands typically represented aspects of space and especially place through crests, emblems, hallmarks and images of distinctive architecture, folklore, people and landmarks as well as producer and/or ingredient origins (Fleming and Roth 1991; Room 1998). Brands making explicit geographical connections have been evident since at least the 19th Century as producers sought differentiation and cachet through specific associations with particular places, for example Cadbury’s Bournville chocolate, London insurance, Parisian fashion clothing and Sheffield Steel (Moor 2007; Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993). As integral elements of packaging, ‘Made in...’ labels have been used to identify the geographical origins of branded products for over a century (Morello 1984). Indeed, geographical separation of producers and consumers underpins Holt’s (2006a: 299) view that brands are “...elemental to markets since traders first marked their goods as a guarantee for customers who lived beyond face-to-face contact”. Product brand country origin and image awareness grew as part of internationalisation from the 1950s and was reinforced in the late 1970s and early 1980s by rules of origin regulation (e.g. EU ‘local content’ directives), economic nationalism (e.g. ‘Buy British’ campaigns) and more discriminating use of origin identifications (Papadopoulos

and Heslop 1993). Despite mainly anecdotal evidence, since the early 1990s, influential branding commentators have detected "...ever growing use of origin identifiers by companies in marketing their products" (Papadopoulos 1993: 10). Reflecting Callon's (2002) 'economy of qualities' and the drive to 'singularize' commodities (Kopytoff 1986), the potentially durable sources of differentiation and markers of quality provided by authenticity, provenance and uniqueness in cluttered, noisy and saturated goods and services markets have prompted greater consideration of, amongst other dimensions, the spatial associations of geographical entanglements (see Goldman and Papson 2006; Moor 2007).

In the context of the multiple intrinsic (e.g. design, performance, taste) and extrinsic (e.g. brand, price, reputation) cues and characteristics shaping consumer perceptions and behaviour, longstanding research in marketing reveals how product-country image and origin is often decisive. It underpins the 'Country of Origin' or 'Made in...' effect derived from consumer views of the differential capabilities and historical reputations of countries for particular goods and services (Bilkey and Nes 1982; Johansson 1993; Thakor and Kohli 1996). Such national stereotypes infuse brand perceptions, for example van Ham's (2001: 2) caricature that "We all know that 'America' and 'Made in the U.S.A.' stand for individual freedom and prosperity; Hermès scarves and Beaujolais Nouveau evoke the French *art de vivre*; BMWs and Mercedes-Benzes drive with German efficiency and reliability". Varying in relative strength, origin cues can shape brand equity through dimensions and representations of brands and branding that connote geographical origin (Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993), for example direct (e.g. British Airways, Nippon Steel) or indirect (e.g. Gucci, Lamborghini) brand name reference, labelling (e.g. 'Made in ....') and/or geographical symbols in brand logos (e.g. national flag, emblem) (Riezebos 2003; Thakor and Kohli 1996). Recently extending its focus to "country-of-origin of brand" (Phau and Prendergast 2000: 159), multi-faceted product-country images work as either 'halo constructs' shaping product evaluations in conditions of complex and imperfect knowledge or 'summary constructs' projecting product origin knowledge onto countries (Han 1989; Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993). Several dimensions of country image affect product

brand attribute evaluation, including innovativeness, design, prestige and workmanship (Roth and Romeo 1992). Such geographically rooted and/or inflected characteristics reflect geographical entanglements and are "...used by consumers to reinforce, create, and bias initial perceptions of products" (Johansson 1993: 78) and enable "...producers to position their brands simply, strongly, and quickly" (Morello 1993: 288).

The internationalising spatial division of labour has complicated and questioned understandings of 'Country of origin' of brands in marketing. 'Hybridisation' has produced 'bi-national' or 'multi-country' affiliated product and service brands and extended concepts of 'Made in...' or 'Assembled in...' to include origins of design, delivery, engineering and component sourcing (Phau and Prendergast 2000). Depending upon specific connotations in particular geographical markets, origins can be less easily or obviously discernable. Brand owners now have greater potential to play up or hide origin cues, selectively constructing and representing origins through branding (Papadopoulos 1993; Thakor and Kohli 1996) and introducing a degree of flexibility for agents in (re)working the geographical entanglements of brands through branding. The inescapable geographies of brands and branding are reinforced by claims that "country image identifiers" (Papadopolous 1993: 17) and product "nationalities" (Phau and Prendergast 2000: 164) are growing in importance because competition and standardization in globalizing markets reduces uniqueness and stimulates demands for authenticity and provenance. Thode and Maskulka (1998), for example, see place-based strategies as specific extensions of country-of-origin because geographic designations signal quality in brand equity. Even 'global' brands are seen as geographical in seeking to evoke 'world origin' (e.g. Benetton, Ford 'Geo') (Papadopoulos 1993: 18). Marketing practices have sought to use loosely specified notions of 'place' to summon softer attributes – aura, feelings, mystique (Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993: xxi) – and connect to the growth of emotionally-based brand differentiators (de Chernatony 2001).

Marketing offers much to interpret brand and branding geographies but it is strongly wedded to the 'national' because of long established '*Country of Origin*' research and, where it acknowledges broader spatial dimensions, its geographies are underdeveloped and loosely specified. This matters because it undervalues the importance of diverse and varied geographical entanglements in the value and meaning of brands and branding and its singularly 'national' frame obscures and impoverishes conceptions of space and place in brands and branding just at the time when marketing is claiming to recognise the growing importance of more particular and/or specific origin identifiers. Integral to marketing strategies seeking sustainable differentiation through geographical associations, for example, is the recognition that "Products are not necessarily made in 'countries'. They are made in 'places', or geographic origins, which can be anything from a city to a state or province, a country, a region, a continent-or the world, in the case of 'global' products" (Papadopolous 1993: 4; see also Morello 1993). Similarly, Thakor and Kohli (1996: 27) are open to brand origin as "...place, region or country to which the brand is perceived to belong by its target consumers". However, marketing's geographies of 'place' are often left unspecified or characterised as encompassing a somewhat unclear array of "...place origins...related to cities, locales, regions, areas, states, provinces, continents, trade blocs, and so on" (Papadopoulos 1993: 29-30). Even where scalar distinctions are drawn these are largely left unspecified and tend to elide different spatial levels. Papadopoulos (1993: 16) mixes scales in his discussion of how "Origin information can be...related to regions rather than countries (Eurocar rental agency) and sometimes is used as a key *descriptor* for a product category (e.g. Scotch Whisky, British ale, California wines, Bohemian crystal)" (original author's emphasis). Kapferer's (2002) 'local' brand does not specify what is meant by 'local' but attaches the label to everything other than (similarly undefined) 'global' brands and his 'post-global brand' (2005) is termed 'regional' but is situated at the supranational scale. Sociological accounts too have loosely specified their geographies. Despite acknowledging that "Brands...remain attuned to the place-based connotations of their goods", Moor (2007: 24), for example, is unclear in deploying 'regional' at the supra-national level alongside 'non-national' but not specifying whether this means global or sub-national. The argument

about entangled geographies developed here seeks to project more nuanced and supple conceptualisations of space and place into such accounts.

As Appadurai's (1986) social lives and histories of commodities and Kopytoff's (1986) commodity biographies suggest, the temporal aspects of origin are significant because brands and branding can have long histories that shape their subsequent development in often meaningful ways (see also Koehn 2001; Room 1998). Over time, the inescapable geographical associations entangled in branded objects and branding processes accumulate socio-spatial histories that, to varying degrees and in differing ways, can condition and shape their future evolution. The geographical entanglements typically utilised in branding the appearance, delivery, packaging and marketing of brands are often woven into narratives of their "...social and spatial histories" (Morgan *et al.* 2006: 3) and commercially appealing 'commodity biographies' that tell of authenticity, provenance and quality (see, for example, Hughes and Reimer 2004; Jackson *et al.* 2006). Distinctive identities and histories drawing upon spatial associations seek to establish authenticity and attract, stimulate and sustain interest in specific brands in the context of media pluralization and cacophony. Speciality food brands, for example, are often "...marketed in ways which try to exploit the cultural meanings attached to the region of production...In linking products to 'cultural markers' or local images such as landscapes, cultural traditions, and historic monuments, their value can be enhanced because consumers come to identify certain products with specific places" (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1999: 2208). Such recognition of the historically evolving and, it is argued, inescapably spatially rooted identities, personalities and narratives crafted for goods and services brands through branding processes are evident in other research too, for example branding commentators (Aaker 1997), economic historians (Da Silva Lopes 2002) and sociologists (Holt 2006b).

The long history of especially brands and branding is important because goods and services brands accumulate geographically entangled characteristics, identities and values from which extrication or reworking is difficult. Such socio-spatial histories can impart a degree of path dependence upon their

subsequent evolution, trajectories and branding. Some brands are unable to shake off such associations, for example McDonalds' reputation for poor quality fast food and its links to American economic and cultural imperialism have proved resilient despite their recent brand makeover and attempts to improve the dietary quality of their products in the UK and elsewhere (see Ritzer 1998). Other brands have become tainted by spatial connotations in geographically differentiated ways, for example the boycott of Danish products in Islamic countries following the religious cartoons controversy in 2006. In this way, the entanglements of 'geographical lore' can be sticky, slow changing and adhere to particular commodities (Jackson 2004) and practices, even events, may rapidly re-shape origin perceptions and contaminate the geographical entanglements of goods and services brands in particular spatial contexts during specific periods. Other examples demonstrate how perceptions and geographical entanglements can be actively shaped over time to the commercial benefit of the brand through branding practices. South Korean electronics group Samsung, for example, has rid itself of a reputation for poor quality, unreliability and low prices associated with new entrant producers from East Asia during the 1970s and 1980s through high levels of investment in new product ranges, quality and brand building and promotion including high profile celebrity endorsement and sponsorship deals (Wilmott 2007). Recent flagship initiative the 'Samsung Experience' in New York, for example, uses a showcase store located in a trend-setting global city and experiential marketing techniques to expose consumers to new products prior to general release. The intention is to implicate the new commodities into consumer lifestyles as a means to inspire loyalty, stimulate word of mouth circulation and encourage repeat purchase and consumption (Moor 2007).

## 2 *Spatial circuits of value and meaning and uneven development*

Strong claims have been made for brands as a "...central feature of contemporary economic life" (Lury 2004: 27) and branding as a "...core activity of capitalism" (Holt 2006a: 300). The argument



here would urge caution against overstating the importance of brands and branding but would accept that their prevalence and growing emphasis signals something distinctive in a “...a major change in the character of contemporary accumulation” (Hudson 2005: 68). The contention here is that such change is because of the ways in which the inescapably entangled geographies of brands and branding connect and articulate with and through not only spatial circuits of value but of meaning too. Brands and branding are central in the dialectic between spaces and circuits of value and meaning and representations of the ‘economic’ in markets (Hudson 2005; Sayer 2001). Spatialities of brands and branding implicate their inescapable geographical entanglements in their value and meaning in material, discursive and symbolic ways throughout spatial circuits of production, circulation, consumption and regulation. Brand reputation and loyalty and the geographical connotations in which these and other facets of brand equity are enmeshed are recognised sources of value amongst spatial nodes and flows of value production, enhancement, extraction, exchange and appropriation (Henderson *et al.* 2002; Smith *et al.* 2002). As Hudson (2005: 68) notes “...brand owners frequently present branded objects in themed spaces – parks, restaurants, pubs and shops – or contribute to the elaboration of themed lifestyles through the sponsoring of events and activities...this creation of such ‘(hallucinatory) spaces of brands’ exemplifies the dialectic between spaces and circuits of meaning”. Brands and branding processes acquire, reproduce and sustain value and meaning from their spatial connections – what Amin and Thrift (1992) call the ‘valorisation of milieu’ – and, crucially, this intertwines them with spatially uneven development and inequality.

The product/image and price differentiation central to the construction of branded objects and process of branding is entangled in spatial associations and connects the different economic readings of brands with their inescapable geographies (Figure 1). In a Marxian view, such differentiation seeks to increase the surplus value yielded by the difference between perceived or exchange value and actual or use value. Here, brands are seen as part of capital’s ability constantly to create new desires and needs and turn them into demands by reinforcing the growth in importance of the symbolic dimensions of use value – including those drawing upon the geographical entanglements of space and

place – to prevent commoditisation through standardisation and cost reduction driven by competition. Rather than Lash and Urry’s (1994) empirically unsubstantiated claims that they represent ‘free floating signifiers’ and ‘sign values’ emptied of their material content by the mobility and velocity of contemporary society (see Du Gay and Pryke 2002), Marxian analysis sees brands as ‘sign values’ capable of reaping ‘symbolic rents’ by means of exercising reputational monopoly to appropriate (temporary) super-profits (Jessop 2008). For neo-classical economists, brands provide guarantees of quality and reliability in conditions of imperfect and asymmetric information (Casson 1994). The brand reputation price premium is generated by advertising (Braithwaite 1928) and gets paid to reduce purchasing decision uncertainty by risk-averse consumers (Bauer 1960). In a sociological view, the socially constructed images and identities of brands underpin their differentiation and value – potentially appropriating facets of the geographical entanglements of space and place. This supports the price premium brands attract that “...represents what consumers are prepared to pay extra for the branded good in relation to other comparable goods. It represents the monetary value of the use-value of the brand” (Arvidsson 2005: 250).

<FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Brands as economic categories have become functional and valorised, for example in corporate accounting and strategic planning and in their valuation and management as financial assets that materially affect brand owners’ share prices and access to capital (Arvidsson 2005). Securitised and tradeable, brands as assets can accrue further rents from intellectual property rights through franchising, licensing and merchandising (Batchelor 1998). A branch of international business consultancy has even developed around rival brand valuation methodologies (Wilmott 2007). Interbrand’s internationally influential proprietary method and widely publicised annual rankings, for example, illustrate the dominance of US-based brand owners and cases such as Coca-Cola and

Microsoft where brand value actually exceeds the value of their owner's sales turnover (Table 1). Such commercial consultancy services – what Sum (2007) calls 'knowledge brands' – are proprietary ways of valuing the goodwill and geographical entanglements of specific brands that bear the strong imprints of spatial associations at the national level, for example through the ways in which eligible brands are defined and how they calculate and reflect the geographically differentiated presence and power of brand owners in major markets.

< TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE >

Crucially, however, brand value and its economic categorisations are inextricably intertwined with meaning because branded commodities meet both functional and symbolic needs requiring them to be imbued with symbolic qualities and culturally endowed meanings through branding: "Purchasers thus pay for the brand name, the aesthetic meaning and cultural capital that this confers, rather than the use value of the commodity *per se*" (Hudson 2005: 69). Branding, then, represents the valorisation of the cultural forms and meanings of goods and services (Scott 2000). Since the meaning of, for our purposes branded, objects derives from their uses, forms and patterns of circulation (Appadurai 1986), McFall (2002: 162) supports a contingent and – it is argued here geographically – entangled notion of "Meaning...better understood as a contingent category constructed in instances of use and practice where the cultural and economic dimensions are not easily disentangled". Such a conceptualisation underpins the argument here that brands and branding are inescapably socially and spatially entangled – *contra* Callon (see Lee 2006; Miller 2002) – and provide a means through which to connect solely economic geographical readings with those of social, cultural and political geographies.

Value and meaning in branded objects and branding practices are generated, enacted and situated through historically grounded, non-linear spatial circuits of production, circulation, consumption and – hitherto relatively neglected – regulation (see, for example, Hughes and Reimer 2004; Jackson 2002). As Lee (2006: 417) argues “Circuits of value reach out across and through, multi-scalar spaces in which the environmental, material and social practices involved in them literally *take place*...and this grounding and placing of economic activity in economic geographies – and hence its spatial and temporal path dependency – are highly formative” (original author’s emphasis). The value and meaning of brands and branding, then, are inextricably entangled with space and place because “The inherent diversity and dynamics of social relations of value cannot but generate highly entangled economies” (Lee 2006: 428). The spatial extension and reach of brands and branding that works to (re)produce their value and meaning and underpins their uneven geographies is undertaken by what Callon (2005: 6) calls the web of “heterogeneous actors...including marketers, packagers, advertisers, designers, merchandisers, sellers, etc.” that he terms “professionals of entangling”.

Despite recognition of the importance of such spatial circuits, recent research has privileged sites of circulation and consumption as particularly significant and fluid moments in which value and meaning intersect through brands and branding. Sociological views, in particular, emphasise the centrality of the consumption moment because brands are seen to act as trust mechanisms that generate social dependencies by providing consumers with “...real informational, interactional and symbolic benefits” (Holt 2006a: 300) from which brand owners extract economic rents. Echoing Campbell’s (2005) craft consumer, Arvidsson (2005: 237, 244) too claims that “...the meaning-making activity of consumers...forms the basis of brand value” and branding establishes and shapes the “context of consumption”. Consumer agency is certainly integral to brands and branding, especially in contesting and reworking intended meanings and values, for example through the role of local consumption cultures in adapting ‘global’ brands in local markets such as Cadburys in China (Jackson 2004) and Coca-Cola in Trinidad (Miller 1998). However, it is argued here that the recent focus upon novel if relatively small scale forms of producer-consumer relationships and their

importance for innovation (see, for example, Arvidsson 2006; Thrift 2006) on their own present only partial accounts and need more thoroughgoing integration within the broader spatial circuits of value and meaning that connect production, circulation, consumption and regulation. As Allen (2002: 41) argued "...the mix of images in advertising, the sign value of material objects, the semiotic work of branding...this symbolic activity adds up to an aestheticization of the economic, *which takes place within the sphere of production as well as in the circuits of exchange and consumption*" (emphasis added). The agency of producers, circulators, consumers and regulators are all integral parts of the picture. Relatively neglected in recent accounts, regulation especially requires more in-depth consideration as an integral moment in which agents seek to appropriate, control and institutionalise values and meanings entangled in inescapably geographical branded goods and services and branding practices. Forms of regulation seek to control geographical entanglements through frameworks such as Geographical Indications (GIs), for example, that seek to protect spatial references to brand provenance and attributes characteristics to geographical origin through marks that "...can be seen as attempts to tie particular qualities inherent in the *product* to particular qualities inherent in the *context of production*" (Parrott *et al.* 2002: 246; original authors' emphasis).

The geographical entanglements of brands and branding matter within spatial circuits of value and meaning because they are intertwined with uneven development through their relationships with economic and social inequalities, unequal socio-spatial divisions of labour and competitive socio-spatial relations. Branding explicitly seeks to delineate and define the markets for its brands as brand owners compete over the structure of markets in preference to being constrained by existing market structures (Slater 2002). Such markets and their constituent segments are inescapably social and spatial; articulating, reflecting and penetrating socio-spatial relations between people and places. Accumulation dynamics and the branding imperative for differentiation underpin the market segmentation efforts of brand owners seeking to carve out, defend and exploit profitable parts of goods and services markets, for example introducing cycles of fashion and season deliberately to quicken capital circulation. As Hudson (2005: 69) suggests, branding seeks de-stabilize existing

markets and re-institutionalise them around new, strategically calculated product and service brand definitions such that the "...aesthetic and cultural meanings of brands and sub-brands then become ways of segmenting markets by ability to make the premium payments required to possess the desired brand". Spatial manifestations of economic and social inequalities then fuel such market segmentation because "Wide disparities between rich and poor...bring into being more luxurious types of goods than would otherwise exist" (Molotch 2002: 682). Brand and branding's differentiation imperative (re)produces such inequalities and fosters social polarisation since "The new poor, without the right labels and brands, are not just excluded but invisible" (Lawson 2006: 31). The identification, reflection and orchestration of socio-spatial disparities – finding and tapping into the geographically uneven prosperity of Urry's (1995) affluent social groups – are central to brand owner strategy. The Global Brand Director for Mars sweets, for example, claims "the age of the average is dead" (Murray 1998: 140) and seeks sub-national "pockets of affluence" as a branding priority. Geographically entangled brands and branding, then, perpetuate uneven development by heightening the spatial and:

hierarchical division of labour...with design-intensive producers located at the top...and many of those actually involved in manufacturing the products or delivering the service at the bottom...only a few pennies of the price of a Starbucks cappuccino goes to pay for the labour of those who harvest and roast coffee beans, and not many more are paid to those who serve the drinks. The remainder accrues to those able to assert the value of their contribution to the brand in terms of creativity, product innovation or design activity (Lury 2004: 37).

The unequal socio-spatial division of labour is (re)produced by the geographical organisation of brand owners' activities, seeking out particular places and labour pools that provide appropriate and cost effective skills to support the web of producers, circulators, consumers and regulators of spatial circuits of value and meaning in brands and branding.

The geographical entanglements of brands and branding further contribute to uneven development through creating, embodying, reinforcing and even amplifying the competitive socio-spatial relations between spaces and places played out in branded goods and services markets and, especially recently, overlapping with the emergent industry of 'place branding' in the territorial competition for investment, jobs, residents and visitors (see, for example, Greenberg 2003; Hollands and Chatterton 2003; Lewis 2007; Molotch 2005). Indeed, some now claim that branding has become "...one of the core strategic and commercial competences driving firms, clusters, regions, and nations in the contemporary economy" (Power and Hauge 2008: 3). 'Place branding' has explored the extension of goods and services branding to spaces and places, building on studies of the "...commodification [of the] traditional multi-dimensional meanings of place" (Gold and Ward 1994: 295) that revealed its economic and social logics and the attempts of entrepreneurial institutions to transform the competitiveness of spaces in the 'place market' (see Harvey 1989; Kearns and Philo 1993). Some of this work tends toward the prescriptive and uncritically elides the 'national' and the 'brand' in seeking to conceptualise a notion of 'brand equity' for states. Van Ham (2001: 2, 6), for example, claims that "...brands and states often merge in the minds of the global consumer...strong brands are important in attracting foreign direct investment, recruiting the best and the brightest and wielding political influence...In this crowded arena, states that lack relevant brand equity will not survive" (see also Anholt 2002). More reflective research explores the overlap of place and goods/services marketing within streamlined national brands (e.g. 'Brand Canada', Belgium's '.be', 'Cool Britannia') (Papadopoulos 2004; see also Jaffe and Nebenzahl 2001) and questions whether the mass public citizenry rather than elite 'ownership' of place renders product/service branding principles inappropriate (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002). Recognising the geographical entanglements in brands and branding illustrates the ways in which they can contribute to uneven development by (re)producing competitive socio-spatial relations and geographically differentiated outcomes between unequally endowed spaces and places.

If brands and branding are inescapably entangled with geographical associations through which they acquire value and meaning how can we conceive of these spatialities? Recent geographical debate has revolved around competing territorial and relational views of space and place (see, for example, Agnew 2002; Amin 2004). Yet, considering the geographical entanglements of brands and branding demonstrates how conceiving of tensions in the relationships between such conceptions of space and place might provide a fruitful way forward (see, for example, Hudson 2007; Jackson 2004). Spatialities of brands and branding suggest their geographical entanglements may be relational *and* territorial, bounded *and* unbounded, fluid *and* fixed, territorialising *and* de-territorialising. It is argued that openness to the contingency of such contrary and overlapping tendencies is helpful in empirical examination of the complex and unfolding geographical entanglements and socio-spatial histories of particular brands and branding.

From a territorial view, geographical entanglements in brands and branding are evident in associations in delineated, even jurisdictional, entities in establishing, representing and regulating their spatial origins. Some sociological accounts of brands and branding, for example, are open to geographical context and circumscribed geographical connections as part of imbuing potentially anonymous mass produced commodities with identities "...by linking...[them]...to an identifiable (if often entirely fictional) producer or inventor or a particular physical place" (Arvidsson 2005: 244; see also Goldman and Papson 2006; Molotch 2002, 2005). Indeed, the critique developed here of marketing's approach to '*Country* of Origin' rests upon its limited and spatially fixed idea of the geographical origin of specific brands framed solely at a nationally delimited scale. Swatch watches, for example, condenses 'Swiss' and '*watch*' in its brand name and demonstrates "...the way...place of origin may be deliberately designed into the interface of the brand. This...enables Swatch products to sell by securing the trust of (certain) consumers, providing a guarantee of quality, by tying the brand



to an origin” (Lury 2004: 54). Space and place as territory can be part of the geographical entanglements of brands and branding, then, through spatial connections and connotations forged by producers, circulators, consumers and regulators drawing upon and/or delimiting territories at scales including the supra-national (e.g. European, Latin American), the sub-national administrative (e.g. Bavarian, Californian) or ‘national’ (e.g. Catalan, Scottish), pan-regional (e.g. Northern, Southern), regional (e.g. North Eastern, South Western), sub-regional or local (e.g. Bay Area, Downtown), urban (e.g. Milanese, Parisian) or even neighbourhood (e.g. Upper East Side, Knightsbridge).

From a relational view, dynamic, fluid, even ‘unbounded’ conceptualisations of space and place are apparent too in the entangled geographies of brands and branding. For Moor (2007: 9), for example, branding draws upon more open and porous understandings of spatial entities because it seeks “...to meaningfully pattern units of information and link them across spaces”. Molotch (2002: 678) too claims that geographically entangled brands support ‘distanciated’ consumption because “Through purchase, consumers in effect cannibalize a distant locale even without actually going there, taking in some of its social and cultural cachet”. Sociological accounts have gone furthest in a relational direction in conceiving of brands as interactional symbols, signs and logos that act as a “global fluid” and are “super-territorial and super-organic, floating free” (Urry 2003: 60, 68). For Lury (2004: 50), for example, media pluralisation unleashes an unbounded spatiality for brands because “The interface of the brand is not...to be located in a single place, at a single time. Rather...it is distributed across a number of surfaces (...products and packaging), screens (television, computers, cinemas) or sites (retail outlets, advertising hoardings...)”. Taking Nike as an example, Lury (2004: 55) argues that:

...the origin-ality of the Nike interface is less clearly tied to a single national place of origin, or indeed to an origin at all...multiple origins for the brand are brought into being...the interface of the Nike brand...appears as if there is no need to locate this ethos within territorial boundaries in order to secure its ownership or claim its effects...the interface is not tied...it is de-territorialising...since the brand’s origins are not visibly tied to specific places of

production, the Nike company is able to exercise enormous spatial flexibility in relation to the place of manufacturing of its products.

Lury (2004: 55) is not claiming “that the Nike brand functions without limits” but is seeking “...to show that the performativity of the interface is such that the relation of a brand to an origin may be organised in many different ways”. Indeed, more critical work on the atypical example of Nike has emphasised the brand’s connection and transmission of national U.S. culture and the importance of territorial boundaries in Nike’s trademark protection (Goldman and Papson 1998).

It is argued, then, that polarised views that contrast *either* territorial *or* relational notions of space and place are poorly equipped to consider the often complex and overlapping ways in which tensions are evident in the entangled geographies of brands and branding. The transformations and disintermediations unleashed by electronic means of communication and consumption of branded goods and services and branding practices, for example, undoubtedly render the spaces and places of brands and branding to a degree more open and porous. Here, real and/or virtual ‘spaces of brands’ (Hudson 2005) are constructed within which otherwise disparate commodities and services can be assembled and seen to share common attributes. Yet, even in on-line virtual space, ‘e-branding’ often needs adaptation and ‘localisation’ in territorially demarcated ways because language, symbols, colours and consumer preferences remain heterogeneous and geographically differentiated (see, for example, Ibeh *et al.* 2005). Tensions are evident in the regulation of brand and branding geographies too, for example attempts spatially to circumscribe ownership, copyright and other inescapably geographical entanglements of brands are always in flux because of “...the bounded jurisdictional spaces of governance in which many regulatory practices are established and implemented – or at least framed – by the state system, both interrupt and transform and, at the same time, are interrupted and shaped by the changing relational geographies of flows of value” (Lee 2006: 418). The diverse forms, degrees and characteristics of geographical entanglements mobilised and articulated through brands and branding unfold in ‘unbounded’, relational, *and* ‘bounded’, territorial, space and place over time in

contingent ways influencing and being shaped by agents of production, circulation, consumption and regulation. The more nuanced approach to the entangled geographies of brands and branding advocated here makes Klein's (2000: xvii) "post-national vision" of a more 'de-materialised', 'weightless' economy in which what "...companies produced primarily were not things...but *images* of their brands" (2000: 4, original author's emphasis) appear somewhat one-dimensional and overdone. While Klein's (2000) *No Logo* has been important in raising awareness of branded capitalism's political economy, the approach to brand and branding geographies articulated here seeks to move forward by demonstrating how the entangled geographies of branded objects and branding processes are more complex, diverse and variable and may benefit from consideration of their forms, extents and nature in the context of empirical research.

### **III Interpreting the entangled geographies of brands and branding**

The argument here has sought to establish the spatialities of branded objects and branding processes through a conceptualisation of geographical entanglement evident in geographical origins, provenance and socio-spatial histories, spatial circuits of value and meaning, and territorial and relational spaces and places. It is though, as Lee (2006) acknowledges, a challenge analytically to address the diversity and variety of such entangled geographies. The complex and evolving geographical entanglements ensnaring branded objects and branding processes do not, for instance, lend themselves to clearly demarcated and predetermined ideal types. Yet, elucidating how, why and in what ways the multiple and overlapping geographical entanglements of brands and branding matter can benefit from an attempt to distinguish their changing forms, extent and nature in order to sharpen our understanding of their spatialities for conceptual and empirical work. An attempt is made, then, to discern the changing kinds, degree and character of geographical entanglements to help interpret the diversity and variety of the uneven geographies of brands and branding and their relationships with spatially uneven development. Methodologically, this analytical approach

underlines the value of Holt's (2006b) genealogies of the socio-spatial biographies of brands to examine how the geographical entanglements of branded objects and branding processes change over time through rigorous, documentary and historical empirical analysis.

A first interpretative step is to consider how the geographical entanglements of branded objects and branding processes might be of multiple and overlapping kinds – material, symbolic, discursive, visual and aural. A material kind of geographical entanglement might include specific spatial connections to authentic and traditional methods and places of the brand's production (Dwyer and Jackson 2003). Symbolic geographical entanglements can insinuate spatial referents using brand logos as proprietary markers to draw attention from potential consumers. Aspects of place incorporated into logos can become part of an internationally accessible visual language, exaggerating place-themes by “using materials and designs that connote...favored geographic spots” (Molotch 2002: 678). Discursive kinds of geographical entanglements might seek to align brands with desired geographical associations through branding narratives in print advertising. Visual forms of entanglements can try to utilise “...origin images...in recalling to consumers a rich set of associations” (Thakor and Kohli 1996: 33) used to surround and imbue brands and infuse branding concepts. Aural entanglements might signify geographical associations through music, songs, language and accents. Different kinds of geographical entanglement can overlap in brand and branding practices, for example spatial alignment in a common narrative such as organic company ‘Tom's of Maine’ (Molotch 2002) which situates the geographical entanglements of its brand in a specific name and particular locality. Other kinds of overlap might connote spatial discontinuity where geographical entanglements are selectively obscured, for example growing but hidden use of international production outsourcing to lower cost Bulgaria and Romania amongst fashion clothing and footwear brands trading and branded as ‘Made in Italy’ (Hadjimichalis 2006; see also Ross 2004).

Amidst the diversity of its different kinds and cross-cut by the tensions of both territorial and relational notions of space and place, geographical entanglements may vary in their extent and nature.

This matters in illuminating our understanding of how entanglements ensnare branded objects and branding processes and exert influence upon the agency of producers, circulators, consumers and regulators in seeking to shape and/or manage their spatial associations. Strong, deep and resonant geographical entanglements, for example, might circumscribe and almost script brand equities and branding activities. Brands intrinsically connected and synonymous with certain places, for example, draw upon their particularity and even reflect it in their name such as Newcastle Brown Ale, *Parmigiano Reggiano* and Pierre Cardin Paris. Such brands are in a sense “region-bound” and “...take on their point of origin almost as a defining attribute” (Molotch 2002: 672, 677). Other brands and branding processes might seek to deny, weaken or construct their geographical entanglements in ways that convey a somehow ‘space-less’ or, echoing Relph (1976), ‘place-less’ identity and meaning free from particular spatial associations and ties. Yet, the argument here that brands and branding are inescapably entangled in geographical associations renders such notions conceptually and empirically empty and meaningless. Even ‘global’, seemingly ubiquitous, hyper-mobile and geographically limitless brands – such as Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Microsoft and Nike – are heavily imbued with geographically contextualised notions of Americanisation, Imperialism and modernity (see, for example, Goldman and Papsen 1998; Ritzer 1998) and have been ‘hybridised’ and adapted in particular local contexts such as “meta-commodity” Coca-Cola’s experience in Trinidad (Miller 1998: 170). Such brands are neither ‘space-less’ or ‘place-less’ and cannot escape their geographical entanglements. Each has difficulty shedding especially their national images (Papadopoulos 1993) and they mean and are consumed differently in different places (Jackson 2004).

Diversity in the kind, extent and nature of geographical entanglements, cross-cut by tensions between territorial and relational spatialities, suggests potentially rich varieties of brand and branding geographies. Thinking through such dimensions of spatial association helps us to make sense of their uneven geographies and relationships to uneven development. Weak, often deliberately vague and aspirational kinds and degrees of geographical entanglement, for example, can be commercially functional to specific brands and their branding. EAST clothing, for example, evokes a

“...generalised ‘ethnic look’ rather than a specific connection with India...this influence is not always tied directly to India in terms of production...the EAST brand is sustained through a range of discourses about fabric, design, and handwork and by an engagement with a generalised ‘ethnic’ aesthetic which may sometimes be inspired by India but is not uniquely grounded in the sub-continent” (Dwyer and Jackson 2003: 277). Such malleable geographical entanglements afford the EAST brand owners a degree of agency and especially spatial flexibility in their production and circulation arrangements.

To begin considering such diversity and variety of entangled geographies, Table 2 draws upon research to provide a preliminary attempt to think through examples of the characteristics, practices and dimensions in particular examples of brand and branding equity for specific themes. Echoing marketing’s ‘Country of Origin’ effect but with more finely tuned geographies in mind, under the ‘economy’ theme, for example, geographically inflected characteristics (e.g. efficiency, quality, reputation, tradition) connected to and resonant of a specific type of space or particular place can entangle a brand and its practices and dimensions of branding (e.g. design, name, labelling, packaging) whether through intended or unintended agency. The Sony brand and its branding, for example, are inescapably entangled in spatial associations and connotations of ingenuity, high-technology modernism and innovation situated in the geo-economic context of the company’s specific role in the particular history of Japan’s late industrialisation, rapid economic growth and contested economic leadership in east Asia in the post-war period (Haig 2004). Demonstrating a degree of spatial alignment with its owner’s headquarters in Tokyo, Sony’s brand equity and branding strategies emphasise innovation, buzz and people-focused products and services, for example pioneering the interface between hardware and content, as the company both struggles with and tries to play upon its specific socio-spatial history, seeking to define market segments and capture product leadership in a fiercely competitive and highly internationalised consumer electronics sector. The Scottish Widows financial services brand, for example, draws upon purportedly and even stereotypical economic traits of Scottish frugality, integrity, prudence and trustworthiness. Deliberately neglecting to mention the

spatial discontinuity of its ownership by London-based bank Lloyds TSB, Scottish Widows' branding utilises discursive, aural and visual forms of geographical entanglement with distinctively Scottish mores and images of the architecture and landscape of Scotland's capital city Edinburgh. A raven-haired woman model, often sheltering from stormy weather, is used to emphasis the brand's solidity, reliability and long-termism in what the brand owner constructs as a risky, uncertain and fast-changing world. Responding to Jackson's (2004: 173) call for more empirical work on brands beyond the relatively narrow range of goods considered to date, this framework is a preliminary step in attempting systematically to trace the diversity and variety of complex and overlapping geographical entanglements of brands and branding processes.

< TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE >

#### **IV Conclusions**

Rather than uncritically accepting accounts that claim the emergence of a "...well nigh all encompassing brand-space" (Arvidsson 2005: 236), this paper has sought to elucidate the geographical entanglements of brands and branding. Addressing the relative neglect and under-researched status of the geographies of brands and branding in Geography and their limited recognition and impoverished specification in other social science research, the paper argues, first, that branded objects and branding processes are entangled in spatial associations; they are inseparably geographical and cannot escape the imprints of their socio-spatial contexts and histories. Secondly, brands and branding are geographically entangled because their manifestation, representation, visibility, fixity and mobility are spatially differentiated and uneven throughout the spaces and places of economy, society, culture and polity. Thirdly, geographically entangled brands and branding are intimately related to spatially uneven development through the contributions of their differentiation

dynamics to the construction, articulation and (re)production of economic and social inequalities, unequal socio-spatial divisions of labour and competitive socio-spatial relations between people and places.

Focusing upon goods and services, the paper engaged critically with literature from across the social sciences and debates about the ever more inclusive entanglement of ‘transactable objects’ to explain and demonstrate the ways in which space and place are written through the interdependent spatial relationships between branded objects and branding processes. Constituent elements of the definition, value and meaning of the brand as a kind of good or service – such as associations, awareness, loyalty, origin, perceived quality – were revealed as integral, longstanding and inescapably ensnared in spatial connections and connotations. As a process of meaning-making through the articulation, connection, representation and communication of the values or ‘equities’ of brands, branding was understood as a spatially situated social practice entangled in geographical associations and contexts. Such entangled geographies of brands and branding are shaped by the conscious as well as unintended agency of producers, circulators, consumers and regulators in spatial circuits of value and meaning.

The entangled geographies of brands and branding were demonstrated across three key dimensions. First, geographical origins and provenance were identified as longstanding and enduring spatial entanglements of brands and branding. The growing significance and resonance of geographical entanglements as origin identifiers integral to more durable and distinctive forms of differentiation is predicated upon the linkages of authenticity and quality to provenance. Yet, while beginning to recognise more complex geographies, the marketing literature’s longstanding recognition of the commercial value of geographical origin remains focused almost exclusively upon the ‘national’ frame of ‘Country of Origin’ and ill-equipped with loose and underdeveloped concepts analytically to consider the more diverse and variable entangled geographies of brands and branding. Over time, the geographical entanglements of brands and branding were seen to accumulate socio-spatial histories



that provide resources and markers from which branding narratives and stories can be (often highly selectively) constructed, shaping the evolution of brand management. Secondly, entangled geographies of brands and branding were seen to connect and articulate spatial circuits of value and meaning amongst webs of producers, circulators, consumers and regulators. Branded objects and branding processes acquired, reproduced and sustained value and meaning from their geographical entanglements through differentiation. Entangled geographies of brands and branding intertwined with spatially uneven development because practices of market definition, segmentation and differentiation are predicated upon and seek to identify and exploit the commercial potential of economic and social inequalities between people and places. These dynamics can foster and reinforce unequal socio-spatial divisions of labour and competitive socio-spatial relations between spaces and places in branded goods and services markets and inter-territorial competition for investment, jobs, residents and visitors. Thirdly, it was explained how the geographical entanglements of brands and branding are cross-cut by always and ongoing tensions between territorial *and* relational notions of space and place – including bounding and unbounding, fluidity and fixity, territorialisation and de-territorialisation – that shape the complex and contingent unfolding of their socio-spatial histories.

The paper explored geographical entanglement as a means to interpret and explain the diversity and variety of the changing forms, degree and nature of the spatial associations of branded objects and branding processes. It sought to distinguish material, discursive, symbolic, visual and aural kinds of geographical entanglement that vary in extent and character but overlap and enmesh in spatial contexts and associations. Such analysis illuminated how multiple and different kinds, characters and degrees of geographical entanglements ensnare brands and branding, shaping the (un)intended agency of producers, circulators, consumers and regulators. An analytical framework was outlined to provide a spatially literate way of reading the entangled geographies of branded objects and branding processes in relation to various themes (e.g. economy, society, polity, culture, ecology) and characteristics (e.g. efficiency, quality, reputation, tradition) that are manifest in practices and dimensions of brands and branding (e.g. design, packaging, labelling). The aim was to provide ways to

think about, illuminate and read the socio-spatial unevenness of the geographical entanglements of brands and branding and their role in spatially uneven development.

In conclusion, the paper sought to contribute to and extend emergent work on brand and branding geographies by establishing and developing the conceptual underpinnings of the inescapable spatialities of brands and branding, demonstrating how and why their uneven geographies matter to spatially uneven development and strengthening our analytical capacity for empirical research.

Considering the entangled geographies of brands and branding provides a relatively neglected but novel window through which to discern connections between the material, the discursive and the symbolic and to illuminate and link considerations of the vital spaces at the intersections of concerns in economic, social, cultural and political geographies. By bridging and linking the insights from across Geography, such an approach may enhance understanding beyond the claims of any single sub-discipline to an authoritative account. The complex, overlapping and constantly evolving geographical entanglements of brands and branding suggest it might be fruitful for geographical enquiry to move beyond the constraining binaries of either territorial *or* relational thinking about space and place and focus upon considering their tensions. While learning from a critical engagement with wider social science accounts of their spatial aspects, this conceptualisation and reading of the entangled geographies of brands and branding demonstrates the importance of geography by illustrating the value of more clearly conceived and nuanced understandings of space and place for interpreting and explaining brand and branding geographies. An aspiration for dialogue, establishing 'trading zones' (Barnes 2006), negotiating 'bypasses' and 'risky intersections' (Grabher 2006), even contributing to 'post-disciplinarity' (Sayer 1999), underpins such a project.

Interpreting the entangled geographies of brands and branding as manifestations of Callon *et al.*'s (2002) 'economy of qualities' suggests the need to consider the politicization of goods and services markets because such 'qualities' are regulated through politics, practices and institutions. Reading the kinds, degrees and nature of the entangled geographies of brands and branding, then, provides a

means to consider the politics and limits of branded capitalism. As diversions or entry points, brands are politically ambiguous. While brands and branding are apparently pervasive, politics has lagged in “...demanding a citizen-centered alternative to the international rule of the brands” (Klein 2000: 246). Difficulties exist in the socially and spatially uneven extent of citizens’ political consciousness about brand provenance (Ross 2004), the emergence of “...brand-based activism” as “...the ultimate achievement of branding” (Klein 2000: 428), the narrow focus upon “designer injustices” (Klein 2000: 423) and the marketing of resistance symbols back to brand conscious dissenters.

The politics of ‘lifting the veil’ (Harvey 1989) on branded commodities is subject to cultural critique (see Jackson 2002) but it is argued here that illuminating the entangled geographies of brands and branding underpins interpretation of their politics. It can provide a route to consider the progressive political potential of geographical associations and ties. The entangled geographies of brands and branding can provide a “non-abstract starting point” (Klein 2000: 356) to frame political questions of social and spatial justice and distribution concerning who and where benefits or loses from particular kinds of geographical entanglements. High profile brands have become visible targets of political-economic activism, for example anti-capitalist and green movement direct action against McDonalds and Starbucks as branded symbols of capitalist globalisation (Bové and Dufour 2002; Klein 2000), the anti-sweatshop campaigns’ focus upon Gap and Nike’s international outsourcing (Ross 2004) and the questioning of the Burberry clothing brand’s ‘Britishness’ by the ‘Keep Burberry British’ campaign in seeking to prevent a clothing factory closure in Wales following subcontracting to China. Focusing upon the entangled geographies of such brands and their branding provides a means to analyse their connections to people and places. Such geographical imagination may open up avenues for deliberation and action and suggest opportunities for regulatory agency.

One such political question, for example, is whether places should have a degree of ownership of brands appropriating ‘their’ place as a source of differentiated value through branding practices. Viewing brands whose equity and value rely upon strong and deep geographical entanglements as

collective and public – rather than individual and private – spatial assets embedded in place and managed by civic associations with national and supranational regulatory support may sustain quality, encourage collective innovation and contest detachment from place (see Morgan *et al.* 2006). As regulatory practices, GIs contrast the securitization of geographical entanglements in brands through trademarks which convert attributes of place and local knowledges into property, rendering such associations private, tradeable and vulnerable to de-localisation (Morgan *et al.* 2006). Such a place-based commons of collective assets is antithetical to the ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey 2006) advanced by legally entrenched and exclusive private property relations in capitalism but it might provoke discussion of what kinds of ‘development’ are sought regionally and locally (Pike *et al.* 2007) and provide oppositional bulwarks against the disembedding tendencies of capitalist accumulation (Harvey 1996). Public consciousness of such private enclosure and trademarking of the cultural commons by ‘brand name bullies’ (Bollier 2005) is growing albeit unevenly and fuelling contestation. Nike, for example, had to pay a £300,000 settlement after its appropriation of the London Borough of Hackney’s corporate logo in its sportswear was judged illegal following the use of images of celebrity football games on Hackney Marshes in one of its TV advertising campaigns (Hackney Today 2006).

Entangled geographies of brands and branding can contribute to the growing popular and academic critique by linking considerations of economic, social, cultural, political and ecological concerns and illuminating the potential limits of branded consumer capitalism. Instead of consumer protections critics see branded goods and services market saturation causing brand anxiety, disillusion, fatigue, “blindness” (Klein 2000: 13) and consumer indebtedness. Competitive emulation of Veblenian ‘conspicuous consumption’ means “Once others gain access to what you have, new stuff has to be acquired in an endless cycle of unhappy waste” (Molotch 2005: 4). Consumer sovereignty is illusory in the branded economy as Williams’ (1980) ‘magic system’ of advertising weaves fantasies around what corporations decide to supply as the market ‘choices’ of discerning consumers (Hudson 2005: 70). Hyperactive branding risks panic over-branding of goods, services, lifestyles, spaces and places as

“...firms hurl inflated ad budgets and the kitchen sink of signifiers into frantic efforts to stand out in image markets” (Goldman and Papson 2006: 328-9). Brands and branding are foisted upon bewildered consumers ever more pervasively in competitive markets, updating them ever more rapidly for faster capital turnover (Harvey 1989), compensating for increased failures (Riezebos 2003) and staving off “...the nightmare moment when branded products cease to look like lifestyles or grand ideas and suddenly appear as the ubiquitous goods they really are” (Klein 2000: 118). Brand and branding geographies are fragile and vulnerable to fashion vagaries, commercial rivalry and displacement, diminishing returns to capital from ever greater brand promotion investment, counterfeit ‘knock-offs’ (Molotch 2005) and consumer dissent – such as Boorman’s (2007) ‘bonfireofthebrands.com’ blog and book – against paying the premium price of the “brand tax” (Riezebos 2003: 24). Politically, reading the kinds, extent and character of the entangled geographies of brands and branding can contribute to scrutinising what Ritzer (1998) calls the rearguard and precarious attempt to ‘re-enchant’ goods and services in the context of a disenchanting consumer society.

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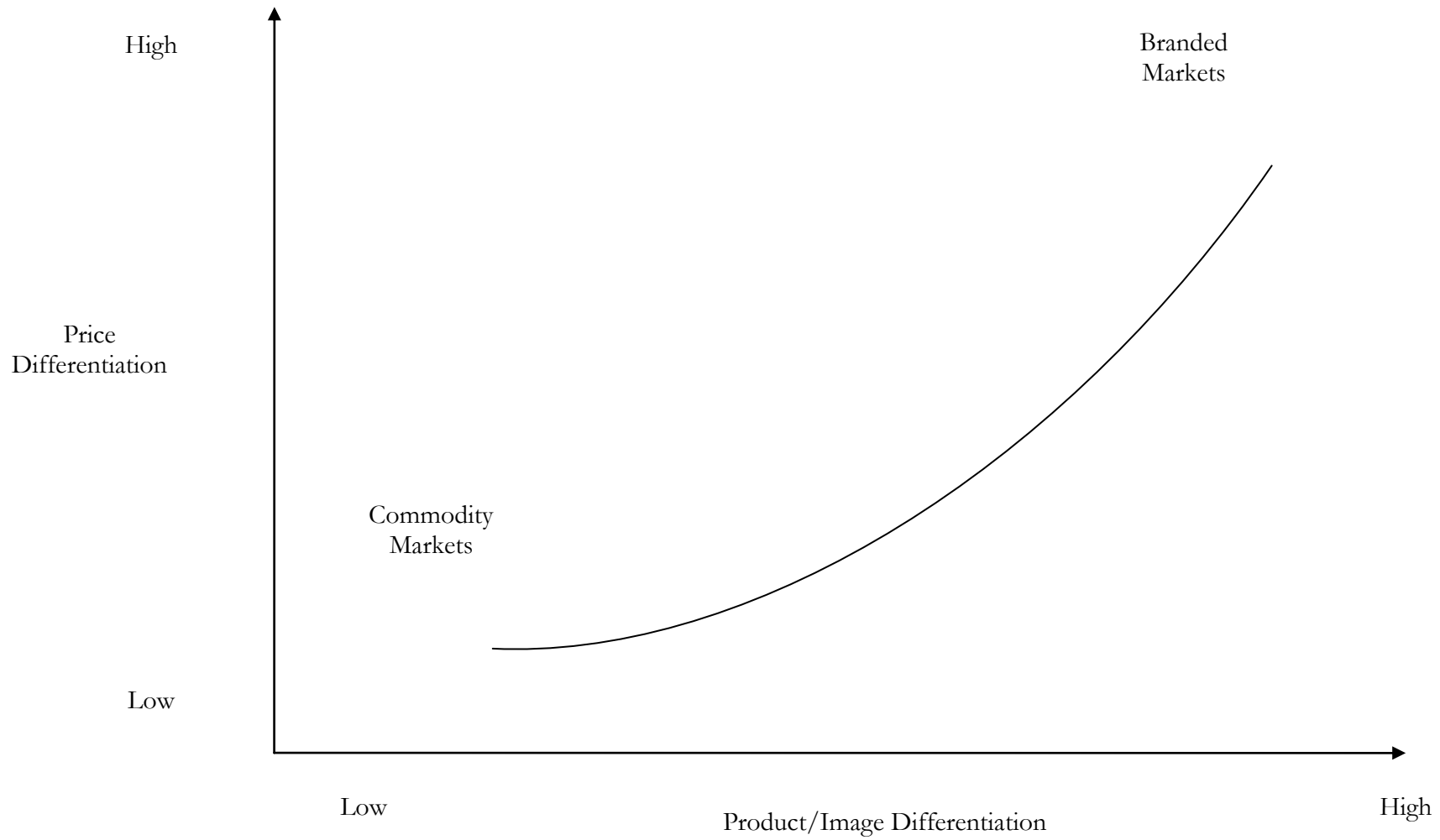
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Figure 1: Price and product/image differentiation in commodity and branded markets



Source: Adapted from de Chernatony and McDonald (1998: 11)

**Table 1: Interbrand/*Business Week* Ranking of ‘Top Global Brands’, 2005**

Rank	Company	Brand Value (\$m)	Brand value as % of Market Capitalisation	Brand value as % of Total Sales	Country of Ownership
1	Coca-Cola	67,525	64	290	U.S.
2	Microsoft	59,941	22	138	U.S.
	IBM	53,376	44	54	U.S.
4	GE	46,996	12	28	U.S.
5	Intel	35,588	21	93	U.S.
6	Nokia	26,452	34	68	Finland
7	Disney	26,441	46	82	U.S.
8	McDonald’s	26,014	71	128	U.S.
9	Toyota	24,837	19	14	Japan
10	Marlboro	21,189	15	22	U.S.
11	Mercedes	20,006	49	12	Germany
12	Citi	19,967	8	22	U.S.
13	Hewlett-Packard	18,866	29	22	U.S.
14	American Express	18,559	27	57	U.S.
15	Gillette	17,534	33	157	U.S.
16	BMW	17,126	61	31	Germany
17	Cisco	16,592	13	67	U.S.
18	Louis Vuitton	16,077	44	102	France
19	Honda	15,788	33	19	Japan
20	Samsung	14,956	19	26	South Korea

**Source: Adapted from Interbrand (2005) Interbrand/*Business Week* Annual Ranking of the 100 ‘Top Global Brands’**

**Table 2: Themes, characteristics, practices, dimensions and brand and branding equity examples of the geographical entanglements of brands and branding**

Themes	Characteristics	Practices and Dimensions	Examples of Brand and Branding Equity and Geographical Entanglements (Brand Owner, HQ Location)
Economy	Efficiency Quality Reputation Tradition Value Workforce/skills	Design Name Labelling Packaging	<i>Sony</i> (electronics) – Japanese ingenuity, high-technology and innovation (Sony, Tokyo, Japan)  <i>Scottish Widows</i> (financial services) – Scottish frugality, integrity and trustworthiness (Lloyds TSB, London, UK)
Society	Architecture Ethnicity History Language Reliability Style Trust Values	Colour Design Image Logo Name Presentation	<i>BMW</i> (automobiles) – German rationality, technical sophistication and reliable engineering (BMW Group, Munich, Germany)  <i>IKEA</i> (furniture and fittings) – Scandinavian design, style and minimalism (Inter IKEA Systems, Delft, Netherlands)
Polity	Administrations Charisma Competence Institutions Political leaders/parties Traditions Vision	Crests Emblems Flags Images Names Packaging Symbols	<i>Swissair</i> (airline) – Swiss efficiency, neutrality, quality and reliability (Swissair, Zürich, Switzerland)  <i>Coutts</i> (private banking) – Discretion, status, British integrity and tradition (Royal Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh, UK)
Culture	Artefacts Folklore Icons Identity Myths Texts Traditions	Design Images Logos Packaging Styling Variety	<i>Prada</i> (fashion) – ‘Made in Italy’ design, style and quality (Milan, Italy)  <i>Quicksilver</i> (Surfing clothing and equipment) – Hip and laid-back beach style (Torquay, Australia)
Ecology	Authenticity Intrinsic attributes (e.g. smell, taste, touch) Environment Provenance Quality Uniqueness	Certification (e.g. ‘Fair Trade’, Organic) Origin labelling Packaging Source	<i>Ben and Jerry’s</i> (ice-cream) – Small town values and environmental commitment (Vermont, West Virginia, USA)  <i>Molson</i> (Beer) – Clarity, purity and ice-cold temperature (Denver, Colorado, USA)

**Source: Author’s research drawing from Anholt (2002: 233), Phau and Prendergast (2000: 164), Roth and Romeo (1992: 4) and Thakor and Kohli (1996: 34-35)**